# **Original Research Article**

A Study on some biological aspects of Giant snakehead fish (*Channa micropeltes*) in Huai Suea Ten wetland site in Thailand.

## 7 Abstract

8 This research was aimed to study on biological aspects of giant snakehead fish (Channa 9 micropeltes) in Huai Suea Ten wetland site, Nam Phong District, Khon Kaen Province in Thailand 10 between April, 2017 and March, 2018. Thirty-six fish species belonging to 17 families were observed 11 at 10 sampling sites. Three Channidae fishes, namely snakehead fish (Channa striata), giant 12 snakehead fish (*Channa micropeltes*), and forest snakehead fish (*Channa lucius*), belonging to the 13 family Channidae were reported. A total of 230 giant snakehead fish were found in this survey which 14 consisted of 118 males and 112 females. The sex ratio (male: female) was 1: 0.95. The gonadosomatic 15 index value of the female  $(0.79\pm0.05\%)$  was higher than that of the male  $(0.25\pm0.08\%)$ . The body 16 length and body weight of a total of 230 giant snakehead fish observed in this study showed the 17 average of a total body length was  $43.71 \pm 11.72$  cm; and the average of the body weight was  $448 \pm 173$ 18 g/fish. The condition factor of giant snakehead fish observed in 12 months were in a range of 0.45-19 0.74 for the male and 0.39-0.70 for the female. The ratio of the body and intestinal length of giant 20 snakehead fish was as 1: 0.70. The stomach digesta components, expressed as the percentages of a 21 whole stomach content weight of this fish species consisted of 51.8% of fish fillet, 30.3% of small 22 fish and 17.9% of digested digesta.

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## 24 Introduction

Huai Suea Ten wetland site is located in Nam Phong District, Khon Kaen Province where is in the northeast of Thailand. Huai Suea Ten wetland is considered as the aquaculture areas that are the main animal protein source for people who live in Khon Kaen province. Therefore, this wetland has been paid attention by researchers. Sri and Pornpongrungrueng (2013) studied Huai Suea Ten wetland was abundant in both plants and aquatic plant along the water-course bank. However, the native fish species; especially giant snakehead fish, and their biological aspects have not studied yet.

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Giant snakehead fish (*Channa micropeltes*) belongs to Channidae family together with *Channa striata*, which are fresh water, air breathing, carnivorous fish, which are a valuable source of protein throughout the Asia Pacific region and they are indigenous to many tropical and sub-tropical countries including Thailand (Mohsin and Ambak, 1983). In terms of the ecology system, the snakehead fish is on the top of the food chain. In Thailand, it is one of the major fish species caught by the local

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fisherman because it is a high value fish species in the markets. In addition, the juvenile of giant snakehead fish has become highly demanded as the small-scale farmers still count on the traditional fish culture by catching the fish juvenile from the nature. Consequently, the invasion of the ecology system in Huai Suea Ten wetland by those farmers takes placed and become an issue recently. The overfishing is able to cause the imbalance of the ecology system in Huai Suea Ten wetland. Nevertheless, the information is limited.

It was necessary to understand the biological aspects of giant snakehead fish as a fundamental information for both of the conservation of snakehead fish and the researches to develop the snakehead fish culture. This research was aimed to study certain biological aspects, including sex ratio, relationship between body weight and length, gonadosomatic index, condition factor, and stomach content of Giant snakehead fish (*Channa micropeltes*) in Huai Suea Ten wetland site in Thailand.

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# 50 Materials and methods

#### 51 1. Study area

52 Huai Suea Ten wetland site is located in Nam Phong District, Khon Kaen Province where is 53 in the northeast of Thailand. It lies between latitude 16°.46' 5"N and longitudes 102° 46" 9" E. It 54 covers approximately 7,000 km<sup>3</sup> and this area is considered to be economically important for people 55 who live in Nam Phong District, Khon Kaen Province. There are three seasons namely, raining, and 56 winter and summer. The annual averages of temperature, humidity and raining volume are 57 approximately 27.5 °C, 74%, and 1,500 mm., respectively. The sampling site was divided into 10 58 sites such as A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J (Figure 1) based on the local fishing pier in Huai Suea 59 Ten wetland.

# 60 2. Sample collection

61 This research period was 12 months (an annual survey study) which started from April, 2017 62 to March, 2018. The samples such as Channidae fish and other fish species, water were collected 63 monthly (sampling frequency). The depth and fish habitat in each sampling site were observed and 64 recorded. The fishes were caught by our research team using the fish nets and also obtained from the 65 local fishermen of each sampling site. The fishes were identified and unknown species were collected 66 to be identified later. The giant snakehead fish was collected to be used for the other studies in the 67 aquaculture laboratory in Khon Kaen University, Thailand. The collected fish samples were fixed in 68 the 10% formaldehyde solution.

69 **3.** Water collection and analysis

The water samples (100 ml) were randomly collected at each sampling site with triplicates.
The samples were kept in 4 °C until analysed. Water quality parameters such as temperature, dissolve
oxygen (DO), and pH were measured in each site using Multi meter (YSI model 30A, YSI incorporate,
Ohio, USA) and turbidity was measured using secchi disk. In addition to those parameters, the water

samples were collected to store in the glass bottles for the hardness and alkalinity measurements in the laboratory of aquaculture, Faculty of Agriculture, Khon Kean University, Thailand. The hardness and alkalinity measurements of the collected water were conducted according to the method of Boyd (1979).

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## 79 4. The experimental procedure

# 80 4.1 Species identification

All fishes collected from the all sampling sites were identified for the species according to Nelson (1994). The collected snakehead fish with perfectly physical appearance were measured for the average of the total body length and body depth ratio according to the method of Hubbs and Lagler (1947).

#### 4.2 The gender identity and sex ratio (male: female)

86 The fish collected from each month were identified the gender by examining the external and 87 internal sexual organs. The external sex appearance in Giant snakehead fish of male and female 88 seemed similar; however, the body size of the male generally bigger than the female. The pelvic and 89 anal fins of the female were slightly shorter than that of the male. During the pairing season, the 90 abdomen of female was wider than that of male. Additionally, the urogenital pore of female turn pink, 91 the body color of the male became darker than usual. The internal sex appearance, two lobes of ovary 92 were found in the body cavity of female and two spermatic tubes were found the body cavity of the 93 male. The number of all identified fish were calculated for the sex ratio and tested for the statistical 94 difference using Chi-square test (Snedecor and Conbran, 1967). The hypothesis of this study was that 95 the sex ratio (male: female) was assumed as 1: 1. The data would be expressed as a monthly average 96 and an annual average of the sex ratio. Lastly, the sex ratio of each month would be compared in 97 order to be determined whether the sex ratio varied with the specific seasons and areas. The equation 98 used in this study:

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 $X^2 = \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$ 

101Where:  $X^2 = Chi - square of the sex ration (male: female)103O = the number of male or female was observed (Observed frequency).104E = the number of male or female which was expected to be observed (Expected105frequency).106$ 

# 107 4.3 The relationship between body weight and body length

108 The individual male and female fish were measured for the body weight and total body length.109 The values of the body and total body length would be calculated for the relationship between body

weight and length that was expressed as the quadratic equation and the coefficient of determination  $(R^2)$ , based the method of Lagler (1970).

113 
$$W = aL^b$$

114 or 
$$\log W = \log a + b l$$

- 115 Where: W = body weight
- 116 The equation of logarithm was performed:

$$\log W = \log a + b \log L$$

- 118 Where: W = body weight (g/fish),
  119 L = total body length (cm/fish)
- 119L = total body length (cm/fish),120a and b are the constant value
- 121

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122 After the quadratic equation and the coefficient of determination  $(R^2)$  were calculated, these 123 were examined whether they were able to describe the dependent variable values (Y) properly, 124 according to the t equation.

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126 
$$t = \sqrt{\frac{(n-2)R^2}{1-R^2}}$$

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128 The calculated value of t would be compared to the t value in the t-distribution table at  $t_{0.05}$  (n-129 2). In case, the calculated value of t was higher than that of t in the t-distribution table, it indicated 130 that there was significant relationship between the body weight and body length.

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# 132 4.4 Gonadosomatic index (GSI)

The fish were dissected to collect to gonadal organ which was then weighed using a balance
(Sartorius ED124S analytical balance, Goettingen, Germany). The weight of gonad organ was
calculated for GSI, according to Benfey and Sutterlin (1984):

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- 137 138

GSI = Gonadal weight of fish x 100

Fish body weight

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140The average of a monthly GSI value collected monthly would be calculated to compared to141the average of an annual GSI value in order to estimate the highest development of the gonad in a142year (a year-round range).

143 4.5 The condition factor

144 The body weight and total body length of fish sampled from each month were calculated as 145 the condition factor which is expressed as expressed as a mean value  $\pm$  standard deviation, according 146 to Swingle and Shell (1971). 147  $K = 100 \text{ W/L}^3$ 148 149 Where: K = the condition factor 150 W = the fish body weight (g) 151 L = the total length (cm) 152 153 4.6 The relationship between the body and intestinal lengths and stomach content index 154 The fish samples were dissected to collect both the tissue and the content/digesta in a whole 155 digestive tract including stomach and intestinal contents. The length of intestine was measured for a 156 ratio and relationship between the length of digestive tract and the total body length of fish (Nikolskii, 157 1963). The value is expressed as expressed as a mean value  $\pm$  standard deviation. The digesta was 158 examined for the feed components under the microscope with (5x) using the occurrence method, 159 based on Hyslop (1980), so as to sort the type and number of feed components, of which values were 160 expressed as percentage (%) of a whole stomach digesta (100%) as the digesta weight. 161 162  $Li = a Lt^b$ 163 164  $\log Li = \log a + b \log L$ or 165 where: Li =Length of intestine (cm) Lt = total body length (cm)166 167 a and b are the constant values. 168 169 170 **Results and discussion** 171 The observation of study area and water quality 172 The water-course bank of Huai Suea Ten wetland was brooked and there was the abundance 173 of both plants and aquatic plant along the water-course bank. The ranges of water quality (DO = 2.5-174 5.0 mg/L; pH = 5.5-5.7; temperature = 23-32 °C; alkalinity = 54-66 mg/L; hardness = 57-59 mg/L; 175 and turbidity = 30-130 mg/L) measured in all sampling sites in Huai Suea Ten wetland was 176 considered in the normal range for the natural fishes. 177 2. Fish species identification and diversity 178 A study on the general characteristics and taxonomy of fishes is used as the significantly

important indicators of the fish habitats, fish existence and fish behaviors (Wootton, 1998) that is a

fundamental information for both of the conservation of certain invaded species and the researches todevelop the aquaculture industries.

182 Based on the results of the annual survey from April, 2017 to March, 2018 in Huai Suea Ten 183 wetland site is located in Nam Phong District, Khon Kaen Province, 36 fish species belonging to 17 184 families were observed in 10 sampling sites (Table 1). The family Channidae, three fishes such as 185 snakehead fish (Channa striata), giant snakehead fish (Channa micropeltes) (Figure 2), and forest 186 snakehead fish (*Channa lucius*), were observed in this survey. In addition to the giant snakehead fish 187 which was the target fish found in this survey, the Cyprinid fishes were the most diverse among fishes 188 that was counted as 11 species. Three of them belonged to the subfamily Rasborinae; and the others (8 189 fishes) belonged to subfamily Cyprininae. The family of Anabantidae fishes was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> place 190 which was surpassed by the group of Cyprinid fishes. There were five species found in this survey. 191 Further, two families of fishes, namely Siluridae and Cobitidae, consisted of two species of each 192 family were found. The others families including Clariidae, Notopteridae, Pristolepidae, Cichlidae, 193 Eleotidae, Belonidae, Tetrodontidae, Mastacembelidae, Symbranchidae, Parmbassidae and Nandidae, 194 which composed of only one species of each family. In Thailand, 10 fish species belonging to family 195 Channidae; and the giant snakehead fish is the biggest snakehead fish in this family.

#### 196 The sex ratio (male: female) of giant snakehead fish

197 According to the annual sampling of giant snakehead fish, a total of 230 giant snakehead fish 198 were found in this survey which consisted of 118 males and 112 females. The sex ratio (male: female) 199 was 1: 0.95 (Table 2). The sex ratio was hypothesized that the ratio of the male was equal the female 200 as 1: 1 at 95% of the confident interval. As a result of Chi-square test in the annual survey, the 201 calculated value of Chi-square (9.465) was lower that the table value of Chi-square (19.68; df = 11), 202 indicating there was no a significant difference in the sex ratio of giant snakehead fish (p>0.05). 203 Based on the result of the monthly survey, the calculated values of Chi-square were lower that the 204 table value of Chi-square (3.84; df = 1), indicating there was no a significant difference in the sex 205 ratio of giant snakehead fish (p>0.05).

#### 206 The relationship between body weight and body length

207 There was a significantly positive relationship between the body length and body weight of 208 230 giant snakehead fish ( $R^2 = 0.696$ ) collected from April, 2017 to March, 2018 in Huai Suea Ten 209 wetland (Figure 6).

#### 210 Gonadosomatic index (GSI)

The gonadosomatic index (GSI) of each gender collected monthly was used to indicate the maturity period of giant snakehead fish in a year by comparing the value in each month. The GSI of a total of 230 giant snakehead fish observed in 12 months showed that GSI of 118 males was in a range of 0.140-0.361%, and the highest value (0.36%) and lowest of GSI values were found in December, 2017 and April, 2018, respectively (Figure 4). The GSI of 112 females was in a range of 0.299-1.788%, and the highest value (1.79%) and lowest of GSI values were found in June, 2017 and 217 December, 2018, respectively. In comparison, the GSI value of the female was higher than that of the 218 male that indicates the gonad (ovary) of female is greater level of gonad development, in terms of the 219 weight, than that (sperm) of male.

#### 220 The condition factor

221 The condition factor is an indicator of the health status and maturity which are commonly 222 varied with the season and several factors such as fish species, fish body size, fish gender, food 223 availability and the quality of environment (Nikolskii, 1963). The body length and body weight of a 224 total of 230 giant snakehead fish observed in this study showed that the longest and shortest body 225 lengths of fish were 14.3 and 73.3 cm, respectively; and the average of a total body length was 226 43.71±11.72 cm. The heaviest and lightest body weights of fish were 125 and 1,254 g/fish, 227 respectively; and the average of the body weight was 448±173 g/fish (Table 3). The condition factor 228 (K) of a total of 230 giant snakehead fish observed in 12 months showed that the condition factor of 229 the male was in a range of 0.45-0.74, and the highest value and lowest of condition factor values were 230 found in June, 2017 and April, 2018, respectively. The condition factor of the female was in a range 231 of 0.39-0.70, and the highest value and lowest of condition factor values were found in October, 2017 232 and April, 2018, respectively. According to our study, the condition factor in giant snakehead fish 233 slightly changed during an annual observation due to this fish species generally live in the wetland all 234 years long.

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#### 7. The relationship between the body and intestinal lengths and stomach content index

236 The longest and shortest intestinal length of fish were 16.95 and 48.00 cm, respectively; and 237 average of intestinal length was 30.16±12.04 cm. The ratio of the body and intestinal length of giant 238 snakehead fish was 1: 0.70 (Table 4). The type of stomach content examined in 230 fish displayed 239 that only 24 fish of which stomach contained the digesta; and the stomach of the other 206 fish 240 contained no digesta. The components of stomach content included fish fillet, small fish and digested 241 content which was not able to be identified due to the complete digestion. The portion of a total 242 stomach content, counted as 100%, comprised of 51.8% of fish fillet, 30.3% of small fish and 17.9% 243 of digested content (Figure 7). The ratio of the body and intestinal length (1: 0.70) of giant snakehead 244 fish was in a range of the carnivore fish. Likewise, the stomach digesta components found in this 245 study indicates that the feeding behavior of giant snakehead fish has not changed which is carnivore 246 fish.

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#### 248 Conclusion

249 Based on the results of the annual survey from April, 2017 to March, 2018 in Huai Suea 250 wetland, there were 36 fish species belonging to 17 families were observed in 10 sampling sites. 251 Three Chanidae fishes, namely snakehead fish (Channa striatus), giant snakehead fish (Channa 252 lucius), and forest snakehead fish (Channa micropeltes), belonging to the family Chanidae were 253 reported. A total of 230 giant snakehead fish were found in this survey which consisted of 118 males

254	and 112 females. The sex ratio (male: female) was 1: 0.95. The GSI value of the female was higher
255	than that of the male that indicates the gonad of female is greater level of gonad development than
256	that of male. The body length and body weight of a total of 230 giant snakehead fish observed in this
257	study showed that the longest and shortest body lengths of fish were 14.3 and 73.3 cm, respectively;
258	and the average of a total body length was 43.71±11.72 cm. The heaviest and lightest body weights
259	of fish were 125 and 1,254 g/fish, respectively; and the average of the body weight was 448±173
260	g/fish. The condition factors of giant snakehead fish observed in 12 months were in a range of 0.45-
261	0.74% for the male and 0.39-0.70% for the female. The ratio of the body and intestinal length of giant
262	snakehead fish was as 1: 0.70. The stomach digesta components of this fish species consisted of
263	51.8% of fish fillet, 30.3% of small fish and 17.9% of digested digesta.
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266	Ethical Approval:
267	
268	As per international standard written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the
269	author(s).
270	
271	Conflict of interest
272	None
273	
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Figure 1 Ten sampling sites (10 sites) where the samples were collected in Huai Suea Ten
wetland, Nam Phong District, Khon Kaen Province





Figure 3 the tendency of the condition factor (K) of the giant snakehead fish of male and
female in Huai Suea Ten wetland, Nam Phong District, Khon Kaen Province from April,

3062017 – March, 2018 (The error bars are the standard deviation.)

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**Figure 4** Gonadosomaic index (%) of the giant snakehead fish of male (n = 118) and female (n = 112) in Huai Suea Ten wetland, Nam Phong District, Khon Kaen Province from April,

312 2017 – March, 2018 (The error bars are the standard deviation.)



- **Figure 5** the difference of urogenital pore of giant snakehead fish collected during the pairing
- season in Huai Suea Ten wetland, Nam Phong District, Khon Kaen Province (left = male;
- 318 right = female)



323Figure 6 the relationship between the body length and body weight of giant snakehead fish324 $(R^2 = 0.696)$  in Huai Suea Ten wetland, Nam Phong District, Khon Kaen Province collected325from April, 2017 – March, 2018





- **Figure 7** The type of and amount of stomach content of Giant snakehead fish (n = 230); the
- 331 values are expressed as percentage (%) of a whole stomach digesta as the digesta weight.
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- **Table 1** The fish species were observed in all sampling site in Huai Suea Ten wetland, Nam
- 334 Phong District, Khon Kaen Province

Family	Subfamily	Scientific name
Notopteridae		Notopterus notopterus
Cyprinidae	Rasborinae	Esomus metallicus
		Rasbora rubrodorsalis
		Rasbora borapetensis
	Cyprininae	Cyclocheilichthys apogon
. // ~		Osteochilus hasselti
///		Labiobarbas spilopleura
		Puntioplites proctozysron
		Puntius leiacanthus
		Puntius gonionotus
		Hampala dispar
		Cirrhinus molitorella
Channidae		Channa st <mark>riata</mark>
		Channa lucius
		Channa micropeltes
Anabantidae		Anabas testudineus
		Trichopsis vittatus
		Trichogaster trichopterus

	Trichopsis pumila
	Betta smaragdina
Cobitidae	Lepidocephalus hasselti
	Acanthopsis choirorhynchos
Siluridae	Ompok bimaculatus
	Krytopterus bleekeri
Ambassidae	Parambassis siamensis
Nandidae	Nandus nebulosus
Belonidae	Xenentodon cancila
Bagridae	Mystus vittatus
	Mystus nemurus
Clariidae	Clarias batrachus
Symbranchidae	Monopterus albus
Tetrodontidae	Tetrodo nleiurus
Mastacembelidae	Macrognathus siamensis
Pristolepidae	Pristolepis fasciatus
Cichlidae	Oreochromis niloticus
Eleotridae	Oxyeletris marmoratus
Total = 17 families	36 species

- **Table 2** the sex ratio of Giant snakehead fish collected in Huai Suea Ten wetland, Nam
- 339 Phong District, Khon Kaen Province from April, 2017 March, 2018

Month/year	Fish number		Total	Sex ratio		Chi-	п
wioniii/year =	Male	Female	-1 Utal	Male	Female	square	110
April 17	10	10	20	1	1.00	0.014	accept
May 17	13	8	21	1	0.62	0.945	accept
June 17	10	8	18	1	0.80	0.130	accept
July 27	8	7	15	1	0.86	0.025	accept
August 17	10	7	17	1	0.70	0.385	accept
September 17	9	14	23	1	1.56	1.364	accept
October 17	9	9	18	1	1.00	0.012	accept
November 17	6	12	18	1	2.00	2.327	accept
December 17	9	11	20	1	1.22	0.318	accept
January 18	16	9	25	1	0.56	1.613	accept
February 18	11	6	17	1	0.55	1.222	accept
March 18	7	11	18	1	1.57	1.111	accept
average				1	0.95	9.465	accept
total	118	112	230				

340 Note: Chi-square at the confident 95% df1 = 3.84, df11 = 19.68

Table 3 the condition factor (K) of the giant snakehead fish of male and female collected

between April 2017 - March 2018

	Male				Female			
Month/year	Fish numb er	Lengt h (cm)	weight (g)	K	Fish number	Length (cm)	weight (g)	K
April 17	10	47.2	472.96	0.45	10	47.2	409.49	0.39
May 17	13	46.9	492.01	0.48	8	48.8	518.83	0.45
June 17	10	37.4	387.18	0.74	8	48.0	541.38	0.49
July 17	8	42.9	407.58	0.52	7	53.5	629.81	0.41
August 17	10	46.4	532.15	0.53	7	41.6	449.10	0.62
September 17	9	46.4	500.59	0.50	14	38.7	381.56	0.66
October 17	9	41.2	442.44	0.63	9	36.9	353.81	0.70
November 17	6	45.2	439.77	0.48	12	42.2	426.33	0.57
December 17	9	43.9	436.57	0.51	11	39.3	386.36	0.64
January 18	16	41.7	416.39	0.58	9	45.8	471.16	0.49
February 18	11	46.6	478.70	0.47	6	37.4	362.39	0.69
March 18	7	42.9	423.33	0.54	11	44.9	469.31	0.52
Average		44.05	453.61	0.54±0. <mark>08*</mark>		43.35	442.84	0.55±0.1 <mark>1*</mark>
Total	118		-		112			

\* The mean value ± standard deviation

- 357 Table 4 the ratio of body length and intestinal length of giant snakehead fish in Huai Suea
- 358 Ten wetland, Nam Phong District, Khon Kaen Province collected from April, 2017 March,
- 359 2018

Class interval of length (cm)	Fish number	Body length (cm)	Intestinal length (cm)	Ratio of body and intestinal length
20.0 - 29.9	19	23.90	16.95	1:0.71
30.0 - 39.9	58	33.22	22.46	1:0.68
40.0 - 49.9	97	44.66	28.31	1:0.63
50.0 - 59.9	47	52.86	35.08	1:0.66
60.0 - 69.9	9	61.80	48.00	1:0.78
Average		43.29±15.11*	30.16±12.04*	1:0.70
Total	230			

360 \* The mean value  $\pm$  standard deviation